

## BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

I am a sucker for birthdays and anniversaries. Four days ago was my 87<sup>th</sup> birthday and today is the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of my marriage to Sylvia. I am still alive to celebrate my birthday, but it is unseemly to mention an anniversary of a marriage that died 42 years ago. One does not say Kaddish for the occasion, but it is true that I think back to those days and wonder if the marriage could have been kept alive.

I have a bunch of new birthdays and anniversaries to observe, starting with July 26, 1981, the date of my marriage to Fran. Then November 4, 1981, and November 6, 1935, David and Fran's birthdays. I make a fuss over those occasions, write poems, and buy presents, even though Fran feels I don't make a big enough fuss, and don't take her to the restaurant she would like to go to. What does it take to be the perfect husband and father? Love, attention, thoughtfulness, generosity, kindness. Most of all, not being critical. Being understanding.

I keep thinking that my biggest failing was my lack of generosity. It may have been the reason for the failure of my first marriage, and it is certainly a cause for argument and tension in my second marriage. And perhaps my second biggest failing was being critical. People (especially wives) don't like to be criticized.

Interesting how this veered away from birthdays and anniversaries to my shortcomings as a husband.

Note: This has been on the desktop for the past year. Today is 12-24-15, and I just reread what I wrote on 12-22-15 about the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my marriage to Sylvia. I wonder if she thinks about. With nostalgia? Relief? Perhaps thinking that we should have separated sooner. Or philosophically, how one's life takes funny turns. There was a time soon after we separated that I thought about Mel and Connie and Camp Wellmet, and how all four of us might have been happier if Mel had married Sylvia and I married Connie. Who knows? We play the cards we are dealt, which sounds fatalistic.

I have no memory of what was going through my mind or what happened to cause me to write about my being critical. These days, it's Fran who is being critical. True, I am critical of much that Fran does, but I choose not to say anything. Still, it can't help but be noticed.